Free Speech For Racists?

In the various struggles against racist actions on the entry of Ugandan Asians the question of 'free speech' for fascists always comes up. People often claim it is an infringement of 'democracy' to break up even National Front meetings. This issue is so important that it is worth looking at in detail.

WHAT IS FREE SPEECH?

Under capitalism there is no free speech for the vast majority of the population. The various points of view of the capitalist class are put forward via mass circulation papers, radio and television. No such rights exist for the rest of the population. As someone once said, free speech is like the Ritz hotel - it is open to everybody...provided you have the money.

However, even if what is called 'free speech' is a fraud for most people, it is still in the interests of the working class to defend even bourgeois rights. It is far easier to struggle under conditions of such 'free speech' than under conditions of conditions of dictatorship, or strong state rule. For this reason, revolutionaries are always to be in the struggle to defend bourgeois democratic rights against right-wing attacks.

Tendencies such as fascism, however, do not aim to defend 'free speech'. On the contrary, their racist campaigns are a means to destroy the organisations of the working class which defend such bourgeois democratic rights. The goal of their meetings and demonstrations is the building of a mass movement which can destroy bourgeois democracy and the power of the working class.

ONLY ONE WAY

It is for this reason that the only way to defend fascist type organisations is to break up their activities before they can get away to a site where they can begin to smash the activities of the working class.

Trottsky made this clear thirty years ago in his work on the 1921 Social Democracy was extremely powerful. To a meeting of the Social Democracy he sent a band with the fascist leader Rudolf Dussel. He says that at the end of the meeting his thirty boys erected all the workers and they were incapable of opposition. Then he knew he would be victorious.

We are nowhere near a threatened Fascist coup yet, but the methods necessary for preventing such a threat must be explained and demonstrated in practice now. Actions against the organisations of the right are not just part of the struggle against racism. They are the first shots in a war that will grow in importance in the coming years in Britain. We must begin to adopt the right tactics right from the start.

NO PLATFORM FOR RACISTS:

from ROSEMARY SULLIVAN

Behind the bizarre series of revelations, exposés, investigations in depth, etc., about internal relationships inside the PIRA, the group has been treated by the bourgeois press in recent weeks by the very seriously thought-out and planned campaign designed by British propaganda officials to split the Provos or to remove Sean MacStiofain from the leadership.

It is in this light that one must view the recent revelations of Maria Maguire in the Observer, and "MacStiofain's English Years" by Ivan Rowan in the Sunday Telegraph on 10 September, and the forthcoming propaganda offensive expected any month now from "Colonel" Bruce Page's Insight Team in the Sunday Times.

As explained previously (The Red Mole, 29 July), the main priority of British imperialism in Ireland today is to root out and destroy "the military capability of the Provisional IRA".

DIVIDE AND RULE

As early as December last, British counter-insurgency experts began to realise that they were not going to succeed in wiping out the IRA during their first confrontation policy. At a conference in Lisburn, they worked out a policy of isolating the IRA from the Catholics by means of direct rule combined with reform. Brigadier Frankie Kinton, who was present at the conference, dissociated himself from this policy, declaring in his opinion the situation had developed too far for there to be any serious possibility of isolating the IRA unless a split could be engineered inside the IRA. Kinton then advocated a policy of selective arrests and executions, and the forthcoming propaganda offensive expected any month now from "Colonel" Bruce Page's Insight Team in the Sunday Times.

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Below: Oliver MacDonald looks at what happened to the IMPERIALIST OLYMPIA:

By BOB WILLIAMS

Socialists everywhere are now having to face the fact of racism against the black people of Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, however, it has to be said that a number of the arguments used by the left are simply wrong and that we need to take up some of these mistaken ideas as they are being bandied in newspapers of the revolutionary left.

1. "Immigrants to any healthy society are an asset and a "bonus". They are fully entitled to social and political rights."

This attempt to justify the entry of immigrants on the basis of their "usefulness" misses the point of racism itself: immigration and plays into the hands of the Government's own immigration laws. For the black workers, "we will only take adult, skilled male immi- grants who are in a good state of health", particularly if the workers from coming here. The real reason why workers should be in solidarity with the Ugandan Asians and other black people trying to enter this country is that they are oppressed by the same basic enemy as the British working class.

This enemy, British imperialism, attacks the immigrant peoples through creating economic ruin in their countries of origin — for example the West Indies, India and Pakistan, and by dividing the people in order to divide and disharmonious against the black workers and divert them from a fight against their real oppressor in the case of the West Indians. It is the duty of the British labour movement to stand in solidarity with the Ugandan Asians and all other black people. Only through such solidarity can the vital unity between the working class around the world and the peoples of the semi-colonial world be forged and strengthened. Without such unity, the struggle against imperialism will be impossible. The fact that the idea of international working class solidarity is a difficult one to explain to workers in an imperialist country, must not lead to bungling talk of "usefulness" of immigrants to the British capitalist economy.

2. "As holders of British Passports the Ugandan Asians are entitled to come to Britain."

No socialist should base his case on bour- geois law, for it is a weapon against the working class here and abroad. The state cannot be won back up against the most "least" reason to_base on workers and shown to be possible to be allowed to be in this country when the Tories are thinking of doing just that. We counterpose the "law" of working class solidarity and the "human" oppressions in the hypocrasy of the bourgeoisie.

3. "The foundation of racism is irrational prejudice. It spreads like a disease because nobody knows to the facts."

It is true that racism is irrational for the working class because it won't solve any of the problems which we have to face. But it is not true that the source of racism is prejudice, or stupid ideas. Such an analysis of the source of racism is a typical middle class way of looking at the problem.

The practical conclusions to which it leads are either a pious attempt to make "read" more "citizens" or a despair at the foolishness of the working class. The social basis of racism is left untouched. In fact, the root of racism are not prejudices in people's heads, but real concrete conditions in certain definite social classes.

Racism has a different basis in different social classes. The bourgeoisie and capital- ists from its need to oppress and exploit the black peoples of the world, and racism justifies its rule. Black people, themselves by class turns to racism because it is threatened by the double threat of working class power and an independent and non-political capital on the other. Both power threaten it with extinction and it turns to fantasy as a solution — racism in its fascist variety. The appeal of racism to the working class is different from these views. The working class is faced with a continual struggle for adequate living conditions — jobs, housing, education, etc. And at first it appears that the enemies of a working class family in this struggle are the other black families.
by PAUL SMITH

Every bourgeois newspaper except one has proclaimed that the TUC turned left at Brighton. The Mandrake, the Communist Party's leading trade union official, told the Party's executive: "There have been ominous reflections of a growing struggle...." The three reasons put forward for this interpretation are: 22 years of representation of unions from the TUC on day one. The second was a joint resolution from the UKW and the TGWU opposing Thatcher's economic policy, passed on Thursday. The third was the vote in favor of a Common Market principle on Wednesday. Two lesser points were also picked up: the ban on Communists from the Labour Conference of Trade Union Councils was lifted, and Mr. Jack Field, right wing General Secretary of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, Blood Transplant and Textile Workers was thrown off the General Council.

LABOUR TO PISHER ON ... THE LIST PROGRAMME

Anthony Wedgewood Benn added a few colourful phrases to the 'left turn' when he spoke at a Labour Party meeting in West London on two days of his party's leadership. He hastened to dub Labour's past attack on the unions as "morally an approach to industrial relations". The 'direct attack on the unions today, as the Prime Minister and the Tory government. Benn outlined an 8-point programme: "The trade union movement must encourage mass political activity by the organised, democratic Labour Party, in Parliament, with a socialist government;". The TUC must take a leadership role in fighting for trade unionists; "The movement must always exercise its power in the public interest."

UTOPIAN ECONOMICS

Benn's enigmatic generalities were given a fanfare of praise by Sir Sid James, the Furness Vickers head. "Mr. Benn has outlined the General Council's economic policies for the next 12 months. Unemployment and industrial strife and inflation could, he declared, be ended "by a policy of economic growth and prosperity". No doubt the TUC would oppose Sir Sidney's contention that unemployment will be cured by full employment, or that the TUC's wage policy is essentially economic growth: it depends on increasing real wages. Unemployment is a 'higher rate of exploitation. To step up the exploitation of the working class means carrying out a conscious and deliberate policy until the General Council tries to present itself as leading.

THE INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT

Of course, the capitalist class is pursuing its "trade union class struggle" against the TUC as well as against the TUC. And the task of the TUC was to give a decisive lead for mass action against the Industrial Relations Act. It was the acid test for the Congress. This year's resolution on the Act removed any ambiguity from the last year's position, by giving it a right wing interpretation: opposition to the Act should be confined to non-registration and should not include a boycott of the NIRC. Scanty resolution, which was declared as the 'extreme position', also dodged the issue of an open industrial struggle against the Act.

However, two ways of dealing with the Act did find favour with all the General Council. One was continuing negotiations with the Government. It was clear in the statement after the freeing of the Act that the Government was prepared to modify the law, provided that the TUC gave up its struggle. And the TUC jumped. It had no choice - the only alternative was to lead a fully fledged fight against the Act.

As the whole position of the party - and keep claiming that "we are not treasurists". This approach leaves the open occupation to eviction by a piece of paper called a "collective agreement". It is a form of self-nysterisation (c.f the end of the occupation at Stamford Engineering in London).

COMBINE FAILURE

Finally it is now clear that the Combine Shop Stewards Committee is sticking its responsibilities to the TUC's work. Since the one day token stoppage on 28 August, they have quietly dropped

The trade union bureaucracy is based on collaboration between two classes. Its strength depends on finding ways back to industrial peace. When even no basis for an agreement except defeat - that is when the other, it has to propose one. Economic utopias and more and more regulation: that is the only strategy the TUC can put forward.

EQUAL PAY, LOW PAY.

The impression of a talk shop was reinforced by the General Secretary's emphasis on the necessity for the TUC's commitment to industrial equality for women. Mrs. Pat Turner from the GAWU made a couple of good points about union unity. Women 'who remain committed to the TUC's role is to be the grievances of the working class; and only under great pressure at risk. NO TRADE Unionists in a voluntary wage freeze under a name which did not directly contradict the resolution. Thus not only the TUC congress presents a contradictory picture: some left moves and some right moves. But a closer look presents a different picture. The Financial Times editorial on Monday, 4 September, provided an illuminating picture of the TUC's current stance. It pointed out that the big class battles of the last months have produced "second thoughts about confrontation both among Ministers and among trade union leaders". Few trade union leaders, says the Financial Times, "are prepared to go back on the period between the miners' strike and the building workers' strike and the failure to find a new middle road that will serve the TUC's overall aims. The economic policy for capitalism which is unworkable, the lack of cooperation with the economic policies in the talks."

First, there is no understanding of the reasons behind government policy on the trade unions unification bill. It has no more use for its groups than the TUC's lobbying campaign. The 'right' at Brighton was nothing but a div. Government on the right of the TUC and the General Council is moving. The 'left' has no chance to fight for the strength of the trade union movement. Its role is to "put pressure" on the rest of the bureaucracy and on the government as a substitute for mass action.

So, despite the Communist Party's position on the TUC, it is clear that the general theory of pref-Trade Unions has not in fact been disturbed. Shifts right or left within a pressure politics framework have a slight significance, but not much for the working class struggle. The only 'shift left' that would mean something would be if the leaders of the working class took up the challenge that has been posed by Heath. The choice really is between the 'right' of (bourgeois) law and the "rule of labour". On a whole number of points, the "shift left" is just an issue.

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RANK AND FILE COMMITTEES

Perhaps one of the most significant features of the whole Congress was the aggressive line of the LCFTU lobby on Tuesday. The Communist Party had made this 'Day of Action' the sole task of the LCFTU. If the Conference on June 5th and preparations would have been left to the Green. The yet the others were only by sections of workers in Scotland. There is no evidence that the LCFTU lobby was sabotaged by the CP itself. The reason is quite simply that there is quite simply the same conception of the tasks of the rank and file and the trade union bureaucracy to put pressure on the official leadership. When the CP leadership realised that it was going to be flatteried and complimented all the more that the CP's group lobby. But whatever happens to the LCFTU, the rank and file and the trade unions bureaucracy will become more important following the LCFTU in the struggle against the Act in Brighton this year.
A closer look at the circumstances in which sixteen Argentine revolutionaries were massacred on 22 August.

As a plane carrying ten of their comrades headed for Santiago in Chile on 15 August, nineteen escaped revolutionaries who had been in control of the Argentine airport of Trelew surrendered without resistance to overwhelming government forces. "I am disappointed," an Argentine marine officer was quoted as saying. "If they had dared fire one shot we would not have left one of them alive!"

Just one week later, the officer was allowed to make up for his earlier disappointment. On 22 August, in what the government vainly attempted to pass off as "another escape bid," all nineteen were shot down by members of a special unit of the armed forces. Thirteen died instantaneously, another three died shortly afterwards from their wounds, and there are still six, though severely wounded, in hospital.

EXTENSIVE OPERATION

The massacre followed an extensive operation to free the political prisoners in Rawson penitentiary - a joint operation into which had gone five months of careful preparation by the ERP, the FAL, and the Montoneros. Without any trouble, and with the undisputed complicity of some of the prison guards, the prisoners were able to take over most of the prison using arms smuggled in from outside. They then rushed the guard post on the outside gate and after a brief exchange of fire captured it. Outside the gates a car was waiting for them.

This was the first slip-up in the operation. Several cars were needed, not one. So while some members of the operation headed off for Trelew airport in the first car, the other nineteen had to wait for the arrival of three cars ordered from the local taxi firm. At this point a second failure in the operation became apparent. No walkie-talkie equipment had been provided, and so the two groups of escaped prisoners lost contact. This was later to have disastrous consequences.

Meanwhile an Austral airliner had arrived at Trelew airport from Comodoro Rivadavia en route to Buenos Aires. As the six guerrillas from Rawson took over the airport, the plane was occupied by another group of men and boarded it in Rawson. The ten waited anxiously for the arrival of the rest of their comrades.

But the second group of nineteen had been seriously delayed by the lack of sufficient transport. Eventually, some time after midday, they set off at high speed for the airport. But the timing of the operation was very tight, and the first group had no idea where the second group might be. Eventually they

TRAPPED

arrived at the same time and 60 hostages in

decided to take off for Santiago, confident in the belief that the second group could easily take over an Aerolíneas plane which was at that moment preparing to land. As the first plane took off, the others arrived and took over the airport. According to various press reports, they were from two to five minutes too late.

massacre was a panic-stricken reaction which showed the weakness of the military dictatorship, faced with a developing revolutionary wave. The bodies were identified by the Chilean people who had secured their freedom.

Maros Ostimovsky, a member of the FAL, explained that various accidents during the operation had prevented a larger number from reaching freedom. On their arrival in Santiago, he said, the Chilean people and certain political organisations on the left had at once declared their solidarity with them.

This was substantiated by a statement recently issued by six members of the Argentine Bar Association, based on sworn statements by the three guerrillas who survived the shooting. The lawyers denounced the official version as "completely false" and go on to conclude that the prisoners "were coldly, deliberately, and vilely massacred while absolutely defenseless!" This despite the fact that immediately after the massacre the government attempted to suppress all such reports by issuing a decree imposing jail sentences of six months to three years for "publishing, spreading, or propagating communications or materials coming from, attributed to, or attributable to, illegal associations or persons or groups notoriously dedicated to subversive activities or terrorism."

RESPONSE

T he lawyers' statement is only the latest evidence that the government's attempt to haul the truth and present any ensuing repercussions from the massacre has failed completely. As we reported in the last issue of The Red Hook, manifestations against the regime took place in all the major centres, including a 24-hour general strike in Cordoba. Further protests were generated when army units in Buenos Aires seized three of the coffin containing bodies of the victims and forcibly barred them.

As the local Peronist groups and trade unions begin to move closer to the armed groups, even Peron himself has been forced to demote those responsible for the massacre, though in terms so vague and general that he in fact commits himself to nothing. In an address to "the young people of the nation," written, as the paper which published it notes, at the urging of leaders of the Peronist youth movement, he simply expresses his sympathy with the idealistic youth who have fallen in the struggle against "terrorism." At the same time he comments that "it is unfortunate that the
Criminals or militants? asks Brian Slobock

The recent wave of protests and demonstrations in Peru has attracted very little attention from either the revolutionary left or the organized working-class movement. Yet this was a movement of really impressive strength and militancy that swept the prison system throughout the country, forcing it to change its management position inside the factory instead of the prison. Under constant harassment and occupying to protest about their working conditions, stranded by a hysterical ruling class press, and facing increasingly vicious seditions by the courts of the president of the local government chief, the prisoners' trade union movement could have been up in arms. There would have been massive solidarity strikes across the country, just as in the struggle around the jail that the five dockers.

As it was, the prisoners fought out their battle for survival. There was not much support from other than fellow prisoners. As a result the movement - for the time being at least - was being pushed back and forced defensively. Why then are prisoners - "criminals" - treated so differently from workers by trade union and capitalist solutions? What after all are "criminals"?

This is a question of considerable importance for the working class in Peru. First, many of the prisoners' trade union activities are often involved in the repression of revolts in the prisons. The most recent case is the frequent use of the five-man prison rioting squad to deal with demonstrations. But equally important are the marks such workers receive for the day-to-day operation of the prison system. Finally, of course, there is the fact that the Prison Officers Association are themselves part of the parliamentary system. So if the trade union moves - the prospects of growing class struggle in Britain makes it likely that an increasing number of people, especially those on the other side of the prison wall, will be affected by their various actions.

My impression was that the first thing on the revolutionary left that I was concerned about was the possibility that the trade union turned against the prisoners. That was the problem. This is exaggerated and presents a real danger for the position of the prisoners' movement: the prison is a "criminal" and prisoner in capitalist society. There can be no doubt that the category of criminals, and by extension the prison, continues to play a significant role in the working-class took in a country such as Britain: individuals who could not adjust to the new social climate that permitted a collective solution to individual and social problems. The prison would become the only way of solving through individual attacks upon other members of society or upon social problems. The prison would become the only way of saving the British working class. But of course capitalist society is not based on capitalist society and this collective action of the working class, rather capitalist society and this collective action are always, to one degree or another, locked in mortal combat.

INDIVIDUAL RESISTANCE

We can see, then, what workers and "criminals" have in common, and what differences they have as well. Both are in opposition to capital society, but are seen by those societies and by the masses of people (after all, a "criminal" is technically anyone who has broken a capital society). The capitalist class can make any of their enemies into "criminals" by passing the right law: e.g. the Industrial Relations Act.

Anybody has a trade union movement in Britain, the F.A.R. moved at first towards the F.A.R. and joined the Peruvian Armed Organization. However, in the last year it has moved away from the F.A.R. and has entered into a process of discussion with the F.A.R. The F.A.R. first achieved prominence with the occupation of the town of Guimar in the province of Buenos Aires. On 10 April, 1972, a mixed committee of F.A.R. and ERP militants executed the ex-president Carlos Pueyrredon on the basis of the Mayor's request to the F.A.R. to remove the most important of the Peruvian organizations.

The Parlot Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (Revolucionary Workers Party), Argentine section of the Fourth International, decided at its congress in July 1969 to set up the ERP (Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo - People's Revolutionary Army). It was this organization, one of the most renowned in Latin America, which kidnapped and murdered the British consul at Buenos Aires, who was the Richard Averbach was, in fact, a very active member of the union movement. Unfortunately the organized working class left them high and dry. It's a mistake that must not happen again. If, in the not-too-distant future, we should see a general strike against the government, the working people will have the crucial advantage of a big section of the police and army being held as hostage. The situation is not quite so clear in the case of the Argentine state forces to be the most powerful of the armed organizations, despite the recent strikes which have been called by the police and army.

At the time of the escape from Rosario, a joint ERP-FAR communique explained that this was a strike by the state forces in order to "reaffirm our desire to unite, and to work together with the other armed organizations in Argentina on behalf of the working government and against imperialism". Having stated the ideological differences which exist between the two organizations, the communique pledged that they would continue to cooperate in the future in order to "analyse our differences and to conduct a public debate on them so as to adopt the solution which is most correct and most meets the needs of the Argentine revolution."
Armed Resistance in West Germany — the Red Army Fraction

Review by SYBILLE PLOGSTED

"The Tip of the German Iceberg" of police repression has already been documented in The Red Mole (50). This article showed that this encompassed every action of society, with the primary aim of suppressing all manifestations of the growing active struggle. The German bourgeoisie has used the urban guerrilla actions of the Red Army Fraction (also called the Baader-Meinhof group) as a pretext for the testing of its military-police apparatus.

ESCALATION

I. He armed struggle, according to the editors of this pamphlet, signifies an escalation of the forms of struggle of the revolutionary left: "Their intervention has materially changed the situation in West Germany, and it's a kind of resilience that the RAF has begun will continue." This is the conclusion and perspective seen by the editors for the development of the Left in West Germany. Certainly it is true that armed struggle will not be confined to Latin America and South East Asia. The Irish revolution has already brought it nearer home — and if we are prepared to see this as a call to the revolutionary struggle in other countries of Western Europe, we must be concerned with the forms of the "armed revolutions of the first hour," as the authors put it, and above all, with the existing conditions under which this struggle was taken up.

"The RAF chose bombings as their weapons of attack. Bombings are a low cost tactic. They are valid if they are acts of sabotage and they then materially affect the daily life of the enemy. If they develop directly from a specific struggle and open up new avenues for the people to undo and relate directly to people's political experience." For the RAF, on the other hand, the method of struggle was to be more than an aim. They believed that the logic of the growing state repression was too strong for the organization of the revolutionary left; that this could not be possible because of the mass acceptance of legality and the use of illegal methods. Through this line the RAF were able to increase the instant impact of their attacks and to demoralize the new left that a revolutionary experience was still possible.

EXEMPLARY ACTIONS

They took this line in contradiction to the arm-chair Marxists who "are more tortured when one discovers their errors in the form of Marx incorrectly than when they are discover lying in their practice". Their criticisms of these people are justified, but the RAF may well go to the extreme of committing only in practice, they say all the instruments that will defeat the state machine be forged. And since, to destroy the state, you have to attack the state's means of repression, the RAF look on all traditional methods as reformist or economist. In the mass struggle or its preparation, they believe, the onus of the guardian to lead the proletariat by exemplary actions. The RAF were unable to develop any political movement which went beyond support activity for the armed actions. As the editors point out, this "resulted quite difficult to counter the 'anarchist, nihilist, devilish destruction' labels stuck on them by the reactionary press." While the RAF criticized the weaknesses of the left other groups, the knowledge of its own ideas was confused to the narrow circle of these same groups, thanks to systematic police seizure of their publications.

POSITIVE

It is very positive that the documents of the armed resistance in West Germany are now available to the British left. The pamphlet contains a comprehensive selection of the covered lying in their practice". Their criticisms of these people are justified, but the RAF may well go to the extreme of committing only in practice, they say all the instruments that will defeat the state machine be forged. And since, to destroy the state, you have to attack the state's means of repression, the RAF look on all traditional methods as reformist or economist. In the mass struggle or its preparation, they believe, the onus of the guardian to lead the proletariat by exemplary actions. The RAF were unable to develop any political movement which went beyond support activity for the armed actions. As the editors point out, this "resulted quite difficult to counter the 'anarchist, nihilist, devilish destruction' labels stuck on them by the reactionary press." While the RAF criticized the weaknesses of the left other groups, the knowledge of its own ideas was confused to the narrow circle of these same groups, thanks to systematic police seizure of their publications.

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I.M.G. STATEMENT

On 10th and 11th November 1988, the National Peace Action Coalition in the USA called for international days of protest against Nixon's brutal escalation of the war. To find the response it must be
in Britain (where the Vietnam movement, following on the Paris 'peace talks' and the grave escalation of troops, virtually collapsed) will need the active involvement of all forces on the left. To build - or, rather, to sustain - a movement on the question of Vietnam is to recognise in deeds as well as in words that imperialatisation is the touchstone of all genuine socialists: it is to recognise that what happens in Vietnam is a reflection not only of the power base but integral to the struggles developing within Britain and that the activity of revolutionary groups effectively influences the course of events in Vietnam. One of the interesting aspects of the Pentagon Papers is its analogy to the impact the mass anti-war movement internationalised the tactics of the Johnson administration.

The IMG actively supports the call made by Indicileine magazine in response to the request by the NAPC to sponsor a Conference (followed by a demonstration) in London. As a continuing action an action be seen as the long-overdue attempt to make Vietnam once again a living reality in British politics. In order to combine activity with the call by the NAPC, we would call upon all other left forces who were participating in the VSC and those who did not, to equally sponsor such a conference and demonstration and to help immediately to set up an ad hoc committee to discuss their proposals.

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( British Section of the Fourth International)
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I would like more information about the IMG.

Name:
Address:
Occupation:
Anti-fascist demo in Reading

A fascist march in Reading last Saturday, ostensibly about the Liverpool 'beat with a guttering' case, was greeted with a vigorous response from local socialists (see photo on front page).

The march, organised by a variety of right-wing groups including the National Front and the 'National Independent Party', was opposed right from the start by the united action of all the local socialist groups (except the SLL) under the banner of the Reading Anti-Fascist Co-ordinating Committee. In the week leading up to the march the committee organised agitation and propaganda activity with leaflets, posters, etc., in all the working class areas of the town and many of the local factories.

Despite disquisitions about tactics, for instance on whether or not to stop the march if possible, on the afternoon of the march the rival forces were almost equal: the anti-fascists, marching as one contingent, therefore made several determined attempts to block the path of the march and to crush it.

However, despite the undoubted success of its impact, the AFFC had seriously underestimated the role of the state. The attitude of the police rapidly changed from sarcasm and amusement to open hostility once they saw the numbers and militancy of the anti-fascists. At one point they tried to decimate the AFFC's ranks, and in the ensuing scuffles seven militants were arrested, mostly on obstruction charges. Only one fascist was arrested.

The counter-demon has abruptly changed the relationship of forces in Reading. The racist and fascists now know that they cannot come out onto the streets unchallenged. Their march, only 150 strong at its height, was meant to be the start of a big campaign in Reading — something which is now seriously in doubt. While for local socialists the event has given a focus for anti-racist propaganda amongst all sections of the working class.

A Defence Fund for those arrested has been set up. All contributions should be sent to: AFFC Defence Fund, 245 London Road, Reading, Berks.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE: Tarig Ali, Robyn Blackburn, Peter Cowan, Alan James, Martin Moyerad, John West, Judith Wint

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O.C. MAX-CHILD DISPUTE

Unlike most workers' organisations, the employers are capable of fighting on many fronts. After eleven weeks the press is finally joining battle. The building employers' organisation has just launched a split from the engineer- ing Employers' Federation, and, on Laing's initiative, has attempted to prevent 'paper picketing' in the strike. In every press statement they have plumped the workman who forces everybody to keep striking. And this has had its effect.

STRIKE BITING

All that other workers could get from the TV and newspapers about the strike is that yellow pickets are being arrested and some employers are finding new ways to get workers to work. The Blackpool employer who flew his workers onto his site by helicopter was treated as a genius by the mass media. Nobody asked him how he got the money for such expensive travel. The real reason was that it actually revealed the failure of the employers' tactic of breaking the strike. They had planned their hopes with a handful of thousands of subcontractors to destroy the unity and militancy of the workers, and by the eleventh week this had failed. So they turned in new directions.

However, we have not turned to the press — whom can the workers turn to? At the moment, the building strike is the most important and dangerous in the country. And at this time every big strike affects the whole of society. By campaigning against this, many workers' movements, provided they can win. Financial and other forms of solidarity are essential. If they are not won, the struggle will fail. This is why it is so important to break the strike. The politics of Charter are being explained in the last Red Mole. And here is another example of the correct use of a rank-and-file newspaper. It could be produced for sale to other workers. Campaigning meetings and actions up and down the country are required. Charter's non-activity on this and a whole series of other issues is a little short of criminal.

NEW MOVES

The employers' desperation can be measured by the frenzied way in which they are hawking their latest offers around. Last Monday the union side agreed to consider the offer of a 26% basic rate, saying that it amounts to a 20% per cent increase. The official leadership were going to make every effort to get it to agree to this offer. But the key point on which building workers could show the way to the rest of the working class — regardless of the workers' movement — was mentioned. As we go to press, news is coming in that the union officials in Birmingham have accepted the employers' offer. With Charter liquidating itself into the union bureaucracy, the danger is that the rank and file will have no means of expressing their wishes. This is the decisive hour for the success of the building strike.

STOP PRESS

As we go to press, the deal between the unions and the employers federation has been announced. This is the picture: pay £30 for 35 hours — deal gives £26; claim for 35 hours — deal gives nothing but a review next year; and eventually, after too much delay, a deal giving a 2½% agreement; a clause has been written in stopping cost of living increases unless prices rise by more than 8%.

MAGUIRE (From page 1)

releases, a phoney peace movement, and a slogan campaign aimed at undermining MacStiofain's bid for the IRA on a North-South basis.

Kazan was overthrown on this occasion, and only the parts of the plan calling for direct and reform, plus the phoney peace movement, remained unimplemented. Only when it becomes clear that this policy too was doomed to failure did they begin to implement the full programme.

But the broad foundations for this had been laid long ago.

"BLOODY ENGLISHMAN"

As an image of Gerry Fitt, the Social Democratic leader, brought up on BBC Radio 4 for the first time in the "Bloody Englishman" slander against MacStiofain. This had been preceded on 25 March in the Irish Times by a failure to publish an advertisement by the "Bloody Irishman" campaign to denounce the Anglo-Irish Treaty. When theSF were not allowed to distribute the posters, the disabled women together movement was used to purge this slander.

But it was only in late July, after the ending of the Easter Rising, that the real fire of this campaign was put into top gear. In the lobby briefs, the meeting between Whitelaw and the Provisional leaders, Whitelaw went out of his way to praise David O'Connell as a reasonable man, and to describe MacStiofain as "irrational".

Taking their cue from this source, the British press went to work. But what finally brought out all the stops on the campaign was the need for Heath to have some strong tactics to present at the March 1978 and further arrests of Republicans in the South.

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"I am a Marxist myself!" Rowan did his Telegraph piece for Queen and country, dredging, with a full research team and the usual expense account, through the tomes in Somme House digging back as far as the 1850s in order to "prove" that MacStiofain's family was English at least back to that date. All this would be amusing if it did not serve as a useful reminder that purpose is an attempt to split and isolate the IRA as a means of destroying the military capability of the IRA.

At least in Maguire's case the prompter pays. In September 1978 Maguire was a well-padded One. Maguire has not so far replied to a challenge made by Gerry Lawless at an Anti-Irish League meeting in Brighton which was reported extensively in the Irish papers in September. He invited her to deny:

1. That she has received a four-figure sum from the Observer for her disclosures to date.
2. That her disclosures have been circulated throughout the world by the Observer Foreign News Service, the editor of which, Ronald Harker, admitted in a letter to the Irish Press on 30 November of last year that it receives a subsidy from the British Foreign Office.
3. That the firm handling the placement of her articles is headed by a head of British Intelligence in North Africa. France, or Spain, the man indeed whom replaced Powell as head of British Intelligence in the Middle East.

This, her agents are negotiating for her to receive a four-figure sum for the publication of a book.

NOT OVER

This campaign of subversion is not yet over. We shall continue to have the support of the Irish struggle throughout the world refuse to take part in the British splitting game by retarding any of these slanders, and refute them by pointing out their source and purpose.

Another lesson to be learned is that all British bourgeois newspapers, no matter how liberal, or how "left" the individual journalist claims to be, will at best defend their society when they see it threatened by the Irish at worst, the special correspondent is more and more the special agent of British imperialism.